

# Young People and Volunteering



**A guide for voluntary sector organisations across  
Mid Sussex**



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## Introduction

Community People works across Mid Sussex to provide support, advice and guidance on all matters relating to volunteering and voluntary action.

We have produced this guide as a practical resource for those in the voluntary and community sector who offer, or hope to offer, volunteering opportunities to young people (particularly aged 14-18) in a variety of settings. It discusses the benefits of volunteering, aims to help organisations prepare to involve young people in their activities, and includes tips on creating attractive volunteering roles and ways to recruit young people as volunteers.

We hope it will embed social action and volunteering in the lives of young people and encourage all community groups to engage and promote the energy, enthusiasm, creativity and talents of young people.



A 2022 survey found that participation levels in volunteering among 16–24-year olds stood at around 49% for volunteering at least once a year and 32% for regular volunteering and number have been growing over the last few years. *(Source: NCVO UK Civil Society Almanac 2022)*

## The benefits of volunteering

Volunteering means different things to different people. However, we generally think of volunteering as any freely-chosen, unpaid activity that aims to benefit someone else, or to benefit a cause. Within this wide definition, there are many activities, views and aspirations – but at heart, volunteering is about doing something for free in order to help others.

For the volunteer and an organisation who works with them there are numerous benefits.

**“One of the great things about working with young people is they bring an energy and enthusiasm to everything they do. A sense of nothing being impossible which is contagious when you are around it”. (John, Youth Services Development Officer, Mid Sussex)**

### For young people

- Better understand our communities and take an active part in shaping what’s happening locally.
- Enhances skills and career prospects.
- It’s fun and helps to develop new networks and friendship
- Aids personal development - raises aspirations and personal resilience by increasing self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Feel part of their community, makes them feel more included and with a stake in wider society.
- Helps with a sense of wellbeing and connection.

### For organisations

- Enthusiasm, fresh outlooks and innovative solutions.
- Skills your organisation’s adult volunteers and staff don’t have.
- Allows you access to more people who can volunteer and give time to support your work.
- Increasing awareness and championing your work amongst their peers, teachers, parents and the wider community.
- Diverse young volunteers can help you engage effectively with a diverse community across all ages.
- Supporting meaningful service improvement by improving communication and accessing young people’s voices.
- Create a strong future workforce when linked to apprenticeships and employment.

## What Young People say

### Eight Key message from young people

1. Seek me out and find me, it might take a while, but it will be worth it. You'll find me on my turf, not yours!
2. Make it easy for me to get involved and play a part (e.g. ask me what help I need); I might need extra help and/or time to do this.
3. Involve me in discussions about what's possible and how to make it happen.
4. Help me to find out what I'm interested in and passionate about, and to work on the things that matter to me.
5. Work with me to find out what I'm good at and can bring as well as what I can gain through my involvement.
6. Use my talents, experiences, and ideas; and stretch and support me to develop new talents, gain different experiences and be confident in my own abilities.
7. Recognise and celebrate my success and help me realise my aspirations and ambitions but remember....
8. Tailor and adapt what you do to enable me to make change happen; personalise the opportunity for youth social action and my experience of it.

*(Source: "Embedding inclusive practices in opportunities for youth social action", The National Development Team for Inclusion)*



## Creating attractive roles and recruiting young people

### Six principles on Social Action

**Be challenging.** Make opportunities stretching and engaging, as well as exciting and enjoyable.

**Be youth led.** Enable young people to create the opportunities, develop their own, or have a role to play in reviewing and future developments.

**Be socially impactful.** Ensure roles create positive social change that is of benefit to the wider community as well as to the young people themselves.

**Be progressive.** Consider how young people can progress from this role to other opportunities or activities.

**Be embedded.** Consider how the role will support young people developing a habit.

**Be reflective.** Ensure roles enable young people to reflect on their volunteering and recognise their achievements.

(adapted from [#iwill](#) campaign “*Making social action part of life for 10-20 year olds*”)



## Creating the role

- Spell out the **benefits** and how the role can fit into young people's schedule. Young people have many competing demands on their time, so show clearly the return for their 'investment of time'.
- Think about making your **opportunities** sound **interesting and worthwhile**. Link them to individuals' careers or social aspirations.
- Use **Role Description** to explain what the tasks are. Try to involve young people in the creation of it, they will be able to highlight missing or additional areas that you may have not thought about. Consider how the role fits in with your organisation's overall aims and objectives. How will this role complement staff roles and ensure it does not directly replace paid roles?
- Don't forget to consider how to make the **experience fun** for the young people involved.
- Be realistic about **time involved**. Flexible times for volunteering mean young people can fit it around other commitments – education, carers responsibilities etc. Intensive placements may work over extended school holidays. Whilst during other periods, time limited tasks, for example creating posters for an event, can be just as rewarding for both parties. Be mindful of exams and revision times.
- Be clear that **reasonable 'out of pocket' costs, including travel** will be covered. Many young people lack personal transport or access to public transport. Support with transport or its cost can be especially important.
- **Offer incentives**. Rewards systems are particularly effective in recruiting young people. Something as simple as offering a reference can be highly valued. You can look out for local volunteering cards or passports, or visit vinspired to learn about their Awards Scheme - <https://vinspired.com/get-awards>.



## Examples of Attractive and Successful Youth Volunteering Roles

Activities	Examples
Befriending/Buddies	Meal time buddies, dementia companions, gig buddies
Helping to run social activities	IT clubs/surgeries, film clubs, photography sessions, music sessions, after-school and youth clubs, sports activities, quizzes, knit and natter, intergenerational activities.
Helping out at events	Stewarding, raising money, helping at information stand or with marketing beforehand.
Wellbeing	Using existing skills e.g. beauty therapy, helping with a shift at a telephone helpline, supporting counselling sessions for young people.
Communication/Feedback	Helping with writing guides, completing surveys, running focus groups with peers.
Influencing policy	Developing messages and campaigns with the organisations.
Publications and Marketing	Editing newsletters and other publications, developing PR Plans, designing marketing materials, social media campaigns.
Social media and websites	Helping set up and teaching others how to use them.
Organisational level roles	Membership of boards, advisory groups, youth forums etc.
Work based activities	In a shop or office, admin, clerical, IT support.
Action Days or Task Force	Beach or park clean, planting plants, painting local play area.
Peer to peer support	Informal support where young people are able to model ways of doing things to new volunteers.
Leadership	Engaging new volunteers through mentoring.

**“I worked with a young woman who was incredibly shy, on a social action project. At the beginning she was terrified of even speaking in a group dynamic, and the idea of standing up and speaking publicly, especially within adult environments, was just not conceivable.**

**Through her volunteering she was able to gently build up this confidence through being exposed to scenarios where she needed to speak to people. Initially through having to plan the project with other volunteers, then by doing some low-level consultation work with people in the community, this led to having to do a consultation event in a local pub where she independently engaged with members of the local community in ad hoc interviews. This development culminated in her, with the group of volunteers giving a public presentation to a room of 500 people.**

**The opportunity and responsibility given to her really enabled her to grow in confidence”.**

## Recruitment – how to start

- **Advertise wisely and creatively.** Use social media and other channels which are used by young people. Many young people get into volunteering through word of mouth, encouraged by someone they know, celebrities or (social) media.
- **Everyone has something to contribute.** Improve young people's confidence, emphasise that *'no previous experience or specialist skills are required'*, or look for soft skills young people may have already gained through their education like listening, team work, leaderships, friendliness, patience. Be honest, say why you are recruiting young volunteers; for example you want to increase diversity of your organisation or listen to views of younger people.
- Set up **simple, quick processes** that keep the young person motivated so that their interest is maintained. Young people tend to be at a transitional point in their lives. They may be between schools and work or college, so projects with a long lead-in time may not be suitable.
- **Match and listen.** Focus on what the young person can offer your organisation rather than forcing them into pre-existing roles. Consider their other commitments.
- Young volunteers may not have past experience to draw on. In order to avoid creating barriers, you will need to be flexible about whom you will accept a **reference** from – parent/teacher.

**John Trainor, Chief Executive of Age Concern Eastbourne:**

*"We care greatly about involving young volunteers to support our services for older people. We have roles in the Venton Centre helping out socially isolated people or those with memory issues; or in the community helping with shopping or supporting people on our transport bus. It is easy to be clichéd about the energy and verve that young volunteers can bring to a project, but it's true. Our clients like to be surrounded by the young, it reminds them of their grandchildren or even of themselves once upon a time.*

*We have successfully worked with students from the University of Brighton. We learnt it's important that expectations for both the young volunteer and the charity are clear – agree the role together, the amount of time to be spent, support they can expect and what they can get out of it. More so than our more mature volunteers, we find that it is better to engage younger volunteers for set projects that are time limited - recent examples include helping us with setting up Twitter and developing a PR strategy."*

## Recruitment – what and where to try.


**Invest time to establish and develop relationships with local schools:** Make the extra effort to contact schools near your area or your project. Then try to find the right person in the school (e.g. career adviser, head of year, head teacher) who will offer you the opportunity to come and talk with their students about volunteering. Some schools run extracurricular programmes, so there may be opportunities for young people to volunteer through the schools' enrichment programme.


Schools can be difficult to make connections with, as they have so many organisations and parents trying to communicate with them. Don't be put off though. Contact Community People, if you are struggling.



- 1. Local universities:** Identify if there are volunteer programmes at your local university. University of Brighton, for example, runs [Active Student](https://www.brighton.ac.uk/business-services/community-partnerships/working-with-our-community/recruiting-volunteers.aspx) Programme <https://www.brighton.ac.uk/business-services/community-partnerships/working-with-our-community/recruiting-volunteers.aspx> which can help with formal, time limited placements. Contact Student Unions to see how you can promote more informal or long-term roles. Think how the roles you offer, or your organisation as a whole, fits in with the actual courses available at your local campus.
- 2. Local colleges:** College students are often local and have a long-term connection with the area. Many courses run at college (for example health and social care) require students to complete placements and run events linked to campaigns such as the Duke of Edinburgh Awards and the National Citizen Service scheme. This could provide a regular flow of applications to volunteer.
- 3. Organisations within the community:** Approach Scouts, Guides, Woodcraft Folk, local youth clubs, community centres and home-schooling networks.
- 4. Community People – your local Volunteer Centre:** Make sure you promote your volunteering opportunity with us. We will help to spread the word about your organisation and attract people to your roles by promoting them on our website, social media, in local press and at events.
- 5. Volunteering Schemes:** this can offer another avenue to recruit young people through and involve them within different local roles. Try [National Citizen Service](#), [Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme](#) or advertise with [Sussex Police Cadets](#), who already work with an existing group of community engaged young people who are interested in volunteering.
- 6. Social media:** Use trends and events to your advantage, e.g. make a twitter post on A Level results day about volunteering opportunities. Reach out to parents' groups, who might then speak with their children about an opportunity they've seen and think may be appropriate.

## Managing young people in your organisation.

Community People can help you with all aspects of supporting and managing young people who volunteer in your organisation. Here are some general tips and suggestions.

<b>Develop Volunteer Involvement Policy</b>	<p>This is important if you involve volunteers of any age. For help contact Community People.</p> <p>If you have a policy, but are new to involving young people, ensure that your policy sets out what you have to offer and what you expect from young volunteers. Discuss how you will integrate young people into your volunteer and staff team. Ensure they are an equal member and have an input into your project or organisation. Avoid at all cost involving young people in volunteering as a token measure, or being perceived as such.</p>
<b>Other necessary Policies &amp; Procedures</b>	<p>Organisations should ensure that they have taken appropriate steps to meet their legal obligation to ensure young person's safety and promote their well-being. Children are classed as a 'vulnerable' group, so any organisation that takes on young volunteers must be careful to protect them. Legally a child is defined as someone who is under 18 years old.</p> <p>As a minimum you need to have in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Statement</li><li>• Data Protection Policy</li><li>• Supervision policy should consider DBS checks for adults working with young people, with trained staff only as supervisors. No young person can be left alone, it is good practice to have two adults overseeing at all times.</li><li>• Risk Assessment. Are the roles suitable and safe for under 18s? Undertake a full risk assessment of all volunteer roles, activities and settings. Identifying potential hazards, dangers and vulnerabilities and take action to mitigate or avoid these factors.</li></ul> <p>DBS checks for young volunteers - check on the level of DBS required, remembering that it is not legal to obtain DBS checks on under 16s.</p> <p> <b>TIP:</b> <i>Get help from Community People to create bespoke policies for your organisation or obtain templates.</i></p>

	<p><i>Volunteering England has produced a Risk Toolkit <u>"How to take care of risk in volunteering"</u>.</i></p>
<p><b>Insurance</b></p>	<p>Check that your insurance policy covers volunteers under the age of 18 or, if required, under 16.</p>
<p><b>Allocate staff time to support volunteers</b></p>	<p>Managing volunteers is a special skill. If you already manage volunteers, there may be a high level of understanding and support for volunteering in general amongst staff. However, they will need to be prepared to support younger volunteers and understand any additional considerations and risk assessments which this entails. Prepare the staff and the organisation (including at the Board/Trustee level). Ensure training and support is provided to those managing volunteers, as well as opportunity to network with other people who manage volunteers (check with Community People for training and events).</p> <p>Nurture and support (not supervise). Ensure you have staff and/or adult volunteers available at times when the young person volunteers to provide support and advice when needed.</p> <p>Consider how you will communicate with the young people volunteering with you, check what mediums do they want to use.</p> <p> <b>IDEA</b> - <i>Create a seat on the Board or Committee for a young person. Young people over 16 can formally join Board of Trustees. Read <a href="#">Young Trustees Guide</a> for more information.</i></p> <p><i>Or think of other ways young people can scrutinise the work you do and get involved with the leadership.</i></p>
<p><b>Peer Volunteer Support</b></p>	<p>Mentors can accompany young volunteers on their first day of placement and catch up later on in the project to provide advice and support.</p>
<p><b>Induction &amp; Training</b></p>	<p>A good induction and training programme help retain volunteers.</p> <p>Ensure volunteers have a clear understanding of their role and how they will carry it out, as well as what support is provided. Make young people feel part of your organisation. Remember to involve your young volunteers in communication from your organisation – add them to your regular newsletters, social media, emails and invitations to events.</p>

	<p>Ensure quality and safety - identify training needs, based on the role and the young person undertaking it. Many young people are attracted to volunteering, if it offers opportunity to gain qualifications, identify what is available.</p> <p><a href="#">Sussex Clubs for Young People</a> offer low cost training locally, including Youth Leader Qualifications.</p> <p><a href="#">British Youth Council</a> are a great organisation, who provide resources and training to support Youth Participation.</p>
<p>Young volunteers' liaison group</p>	<p>If you engage more young people, invite them to come together and discuss their experiences and roles.</p>
<p>Identify Funding</p>	<p>Volunteers will need their reasonable costs, such as travel expenses, to be covered. It's also worth considering other costs such as training, producing a volunteers' handbook, advertising and social events. Try to prevent young people needing to incur expenses and ensure those are discussed and agreed before the placement begins. Volunteers should have access to a local contact who can make prompt payment.</p> <p> <b>TIP:</b> <i>Local grants often require groups to match funding. Volunteering hours can be used to demonstrate community support and sustainability. Seek help with gaining funding from Community People.</i></p>
<p>Legal Stuff</p>	<p>Don't be put off by legal obligations, it's not too difficult to adapt existing arrangements. Organisations should ensure they have taken appropriate steps to meet their legal obligations to ensure the safety and wellbeing of a young person and the organisation's service users. If you already have adequate policies covering adult volunteers, it is a matter of extending policies to cover younger people.</p> <p> <b>Parental consent.</b> <i>Obtain informed consent from parent /guardian for under 16s. It's good practice to send information to under 18s and gain their written consent, too. Consent should include medical information/special arrangements (diet, behaviour needs) and photography. If young people have special educational needs (SEND), parental consent is required up until they reach 25 years of age.</i></p>
<p>Say thank you</p>	<p>Celebrate key achievements and publicise individual stories. Simple things like certificates and letters of achievements work well. Or you can link with existing reward schemes such as Duke of Edinburgh's Award,</p>

Scouts or Guides, local achievement awards or volunteering cards and passports. Celebrate young volunteers' contributions during the UK's national Volunteers' Week, held annually from 1-7 June.

Make sure all the effort that has gone into recruiting young volunteers means that they stay with you and attract other good quality volunteers.

Include the amount of volunteer hours in your annual report and newsletters.



**TIP:** *Think of ways you could measure the success of your volunteering programme, and the involvement of the young people. This is a great way to acknowledge volunteers' contribution and could help you attract funding to grow it. If you would like support with this, contact Community People.*

## Resources

**For further information about young people and volunteering, take a look at the following:**

#iwill Campaign, <https://www.iwill.org.uk/>

vinspired, <https://vinspired.com/>

Young Time Bank, “Involving Young Volunteers: A Toolkit” [http://timebank.org.uk/  
http://www.volunteeringbrent.org.uk/userfiles/files/Young%20Volunteers%20-%20Toolkit%2C%20Timebank.pdf](http://timebank.org.uk/http://www.volunteeringbrent.org.uk/userfiles/files/Young%20Volunteers%20-%20Toolkit%2C%20Timebank.pdf)

Volunteering Matters, “Youth Volunteering and Social Action in Health and Social Care. Toolkit” [https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/app/uploads/2018/11/YSA\\_Toolkit\\_2018\\_FINAL.pdf](https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/app/uploads/2018/11/YSA_Toolkit_2018_FINAL.pdf)

Sussex Clubs for Young People – <https://sussexcyp.org.uk/what-we-do/training/>

Young Trustees Guide <https://pearsfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/How-to-recruit-trustees-for-your-charity-Getting-on-Board-larger-March-2019-1.pdf>

“Embedding inclusive practices in opportunities for youth social action”, The National Development Team for Inclusion, [https://www.ndti.org.uk/uploads/files/iwill\\_NDTi.pdf](https://www.ndti.org.uk/uploads/files/iwill_NDTi.pdf)

“Raising the Quality of Youth Social Action: Applying 6 quality principles”, Generation Change and #iwill Campaign, <https://www.iwill.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Generation-Change-6-Quality-Principles-Report.pdf>

“Managing Volunteers Toolkit”, Love Libraries. Love Volunteering, <file:///dc01/Folder%20Redirection/miriam/Downloads/LoveLibrariesLoveVolunteeringToolkit.pdf>

NHS Trusts: Young Volunteer Programmes (Pears #iwill Fund), <https://pearsfoundation.org.uk/partners/nhs-trusts-young-volunteer-programmes/>

NHS Youth Forum, <https://www.england.nhs.uk/participation/get-involved/how/forums/nhs-youth-forum/>

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## Any Questions

Contact Community People by

- emailing [volunteering@communitypeople.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@communitypeople.org.uk)
- telephone 01444 258102
- or visit [www.communitypeople.org.uk](http://www.communitypeople.org.uk).